

2015 Iowa Homelessness Awareness Day on the Hill

We are committed to the belief that everyone should have the opportunity to live in a safe, healthy, affordable home.

The reasons for homelessness and housing instability include:

- An inadequate supply of homes affordable to low-income households
- Income that is insufficient to afford a home in the private rental market
- Inadequate services for those who need support
- Unfair barriers to accessing and keeping affordable homes

To continue to assist Iowans who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless, we have the following recommendations for your consideration:

1. We support efforts to raise wages so that jobs pay enough to afford a home. If more jobs paid a living wage, more workers could afford safe and healthy housing.
2. Creating affordable homes will help the state achieve important priorities. A home is the foundation for health, education, and stability. Children need a home to study and do homework. Investing in affordable housing ensures that investments in education reach our most vulnerable students. Homes for people with mental illness help ensure they stay connected to health care and treatment, while reducing the use of expensive emergency services. We can do this by increasing the availability of housing units and providing rent assistance for low-income households.
3. Add a check-box option to Iowa Income Tax 1040 form, giving individuals the opportunity to contribute to homeless services in their region.
4. Secure adequate funding and resources to address domestic violence and mental illness, which are leading contributors to homelessness.
5. We need dedicated funding source for homelessness issues so that cities can be better equipped to overcome the challenges associated with homelessness and ultimately realize a sustained reduction in their local homeless populations.
6. Assess federal funding opportunities and increase state funding for homeless programs.
7. Pass legislation to prevent landlords from categorically denying housing to all tenants relying on a lawful housing subsidy or lawful income supports to help pay the rent. Pass legislation to protect renters from source of income discrimination.
8. Take a leadership role in finding alternatives to criminalization of homelessness and oppose efforts to further criminalize homelessness.

- **For these points, ask the legislator what they would think of these ideas.**
 - **Ask them what additional information they might want before committing.**
 - **If they seem supportive, ask if they might be willing to help sponsor a bill to that effect.**

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- Thank you for maintaining the Shelter Assistance Fund, which provides approximately \$900,000 annually to shelters and services. This is derived from a portion of real estate transactions taxes.
 - Programs to help Iowa veterans experiencing homeless are working! The number of homeless veterans is down nationally and here in Iowa, figures show a decrease of 14% over the past two years (267 in 2011; 229 in 2013, HUD).

The Iowa Council on Homelessness (ICH) is committed to ensuring that all Iowans have access to safe, decent and affordable housing. The ICH and its 38 members work to identify issues, raise awareness and secure resources that will allow all homeless Iowans to become self-sufficient.